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WEAKNESSES OF CHINESE LAND REFORM IN KWANGTUNG, SEPTEMBER 1952

Summary: A conference of land-reform cadres in Tung-kuan Hsien, Kwangtung, discussed problems involved in completing the land-reform program. T'ao Chu, fourth secretary of the South China Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, emphasized the importance of thorough penetration of the masses in making the land-reform program permanent. Self-satisfaction, bureaucratic practices, dependence upon out-dated experience, unwillingness of cadres to endure the hardships of peasant life, and lack of uniform ideas on how to deal with the landlords were weaknesses pointed out by T'ao.

During a conference of workers called by the hsien authorities of Yun-fou Hsien, land-reform leaders were charged with hazy ideas of responsibility, unwillingness to take counsel with associates, bureaucracy, and failure to develop assistants and to eliminate the power of the landlords.

The part to be played by journalists and other writers in support of the land-reform program was set forth in a recent directive of the regional authorities of the Central-South China Administrative Region.

Landlords in En-p'ing Hsien, Kwangtung, were charged with having exploited local superstitions to create strife among villages.⁷

TUNG-KUAN HSIEN LAND REFORM NEARING COMPLETION -- Canton, Nan-fang Jih-pao, 4 Sep 52

At a meeting of land-reform cadres of the ch'u level and above called by the hsien Communist party committee of Tung-kuan Hsien, Kwangtung, various problems involved in finishing the land-reform program in the hsien by fall 1952 were discussed. The main problems considered were how to penetrate deeply and how to thoroughly arouse the masses to support the task.

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T'ao Chu, fourth secretary of the South China Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, after having made a survey of some of the rural areas in the hsien to get a first-hand view of the progress of the work, attended the meeting and advised on the various problems under consideration. He commented favorably on the prospects for completing the work in time on the basis of what had been accomplished before the summer tax collection program interrupted the work temporarily, and on the basis of the spirit and preparation of the principal leaders of the work in the hsien. He praised the work done in dealing with landlords, in restricting their destructive activities, and in preventing the flight of many who attempted to escape.

In discussing the remaining problems, T'ao, although not minimizing the importance of a political offensive, indicated his belief that intensive penetration and arousal of the masses is of basic importance if the political offensive is to have more than ephemeral results. Discussion of this problem high-lighted various weaknesses in the activities of the cadres such as:

1. Cadres manifest pride and self-satisfaction in superficial work. Some feel that the work is already done, or will very easily be finished in a short time. Some believe a political indoctrination campaign will settle all problems. One ch'u secretary confessed that he had thought he could carry out his work by telephone from his office. Some cadres had only the slightest actual contact with the hardships of the masses.
2. Some cadres based their activities only on past experience and knowledge of past perils. They were not active in keeping their experience up-to-date. As a result, many of the poor peasants and hired peasants felt that the landlord class, having been defeated once, need cause them no more fear. Some cadres had been active in enlisting local stalwarts as helpers, but had not known how to establish them thoroughly in the faith. Some did not even know why they should enlist such helpers.
3. Some cadres, although desiring to do thorough work, do not know how. They spend much effort and undergo many hardships, but see only meagre results. In some cases, this is because they ignore the psychology of the peasants and employ an "official" attitude toward them.

T'ao urged all workers to remember the slogan of the South China Bureau, "Succeed; no failures permitted." The most important factor in success at this juncture is thorough penetration of the masses coupled with thorough understanding of the enemy situation. There are too many variant ideas among cadres on this subject. With the arousal of the masses, the enemy must be isolated and given no opportunity to hide among the peasants. Authoritarianism on the part of working cadres must be avoided and those who are inclined to this attitude should be dealt with firmly.

Liu Chao-ch'ing, secretary of the hsien committee of the Communist party, summed up by emphasizing the need for absolute thoroughness in arousing the masses. He stressed that self-satisfaction was not merely a trend, but a real crisis among the cadres and must be eliminated.

HSIEN AUTHORITIES DEAL WITH CADRE ERRORS -- Canton, Nan-fang Jih-pao, 4 Sep 52

Land-reform cadres in the sixth ch'u of Yun-fou Hsien have adopted dangerous methods of preparation for classification of the peasants in the land reform program. A little success in political indoctrination seemed to lead them to think that classification could be undertaken on a mass scale. Fortunately, hsien authorities learned of the situation in time and called a conference of working cadres to correct their thinking.

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The conference revealed the following problems:

1. Leaders had hazy ideas of their responsibility. They seemed unable to realize the importance of advancing from key-point to large area activities. Some of the workers realized something was wrong, but group leaders discounted the importance of their fears.
2. There was much bureaucracy manifest. Leaders did not lead out in the work and were unaware of the thinking of their subordinate cadres. They were unable to secure collective action. They ignored the intimations of their associates that the time might not yet be ripe for general classification. The leaders did not mingle with the masses nor attend the meetings of the leaders of the poor and hired peasants. They did not take the matter of social struggle seriously.
3. The people's work corps and the basic cadres were weak. The working cadres carried the responsibility and did the work themselves. The basic cadres made little effort to arouse the masses. In accusation meetings the accusations were too mild and spiritless. Some cadres reported themselves ill rather than take part in such meetings. The landlords were able to conceal much about what they owned.
4. The leading landlords were not eliminated. Many fled and were not apprehended, though they might have been had the cadres been reasonably alert. Some never bowed their heads nor acknowledged their crimes. Both the cadres and the masses were complacent about the landlords.

The hsien authorities have taken steps to correct the situation and get the work on a proper basis.

P'AN-YU HSIEN CONFERENCE ON RELATIONSHIP OF JOURNALISTS AND LAND REFORM -- Canton, Nan-fang Jih-pao, 4 Sep 52

In a recent conference of land-reform cadres in P'an-yu Hsien, the question of the relationship of literary workers to land reform was discussed to try to secure the cooperation of such workers in promoting correct ideas concerning the program. The directive of the government of Central - South China /no date given for the directive/ was discussed.

The directive provides that literary workers should (1) associate themselves with land-reform work, (2) continuously report on land-reform activities, (3) act as eyes and ears for the authorities and give them clear correct information, and (4) provide literary guidance in the land-reform program and check on local literary activities.

Discussion in the conference brought out the fact that while a considerable number of journalists and other writers had recently been observing the land-reform program in the field in South China, the effect of these activities on literary work in the rural areas had been small. Speakers emphasized the need for literary men to assume responsibility for changing the situation in harmony with the directive cited above.

A leading member of the conference, Li Fan-fu, offered the following suggestions as to how writers could properly discharge their responsibilities in the land-reform program.

1. They should acquaint themselves with the purposes of the leaders of the land-reform movement and with the history of land reform.

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2. They should enter the movement to gather practical first-hand material. They should discover the salient points of the activity by close association with the masses. Their reports should highlight the working problems that arise and indicate the trends. Reports should be copious and not only reveal problems, but indicate how they have been overcome. This type of reporting could exert leadership and aid promotion. All material produced by reporters should be considered by editors, but since not all writers have the same ability, selection of materials would be necessary.

Li emphasized the necessity for literary workers to identify themselves completely with the peasant masses. They should give special attention to educational material that will arouse the masses to action, particularly the conservatives. Literary workers should understand that land distribution is not the sole end in view in the land-reform program. It includes social and personal reform, and the indoctrination of the peasants in the thought patterns of the industrial workers.

The destruction of superstition in Kwangtung villages was urged by another speaker, Yen Tan as a task to which the journalists should seriously address themselves. A fund of information on actual experiences of working cadres should be gathered and used wisely for promotion purposes. Literature that is constructive and upbuilding, not merely critical, can be of great aid in the land-reform program.

LANDLORDS EXPLOIT SUPERSTITION AMONG PEASANTS -- Canton, Nan-far, Jih-pao,
3 Sep 52

Landlords in En-p'ing Hsien, Kwangtung, have been exploiting the superstitions of the peasants to create bad feeling among them and direct attention away from their own exploitative activities. When peasants of one village were opening up wild land on She Shan (Snake Mountain) they were accused by the landlord clan of another village of disturbing the spirits of their dead in their cemetery on the mountain top and so the inhabitants of the second village took reprisals by cutting down the trees in the cemetery of the first village on Hu Shan (Tiger Mountain). [The serpent and the tiger after which these mountains are named because of their shape are both objects of superstitious veneration by these peasants.]

These activities resulted in armed clashes between the people of the two villages involving use of machine guns. The ch'u authorities immediately took steps to stop the fighting and explained to the peasants of both villages that the opening up of new land is intended to benefit the peasants and that they were allowing themselves to be duped by the landlord class. When the peasants of both villages understood this, they laid down their arms and became friends again. The land is now being opened up on She Shan without opposition and the trees on Hu Shan are being preserved by joint action.

In two other neighboring villages in the same ch'u, each village tried to outdo the other in building structures to ward off spells which the people of each village believed the people of the other village were trying to cast upon them. Since one village was poorer than the other and could not keep up in the construction race, they tried to even the score by attacking the natives of the other village. When land-reform teams appeared in the area each village opposed their going to the other village to work. After the teams had explained to the peasants that all these superstitions were devices of exploitation used by the landlords to drain off their wealth, they put away their enmity, destroyed their superstitious structures, and began to work together to rid themselves of the landlords' power.

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